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THE NATURE AND USE OF BEAUTY.

CHAPTER VI.

CONFIRMATION OF THE THEORY OF THE DIVINITY OF BEAUTY.—(Concluded.)

APART from all other theorists on the Beautiful, and, to our mind, immeasurably above them, in respect of appreciation of Beauty and nobility of estimation of it, as well as in the correctness of his views of it, stands John Ruskin. But since, unfortunately, there are certain great qualities of mind which seem not to consist with each other in one organization, those logical-making faculties which remove a theory from the position of an opinion to that of an established and demonstrated truth, have been in him somewhat displaced by a wonderful intensity of imagination, kept in highest activity and health by its nutritive faculty, perception the keenest and most incessant, and made deep and tender by fullness of reverence and worship; while the exuberance of his delight in the sensations of Beauty, coupled, perhaps, with a certain lack of repose, renders impossible all severe and minute analysis of his emotions. But in the clearness and strength of those emotion are brought to light some truths which purely rational philosophy would long have labored for in vain, which it has never yet possessed fully, yet which are to him so evident, that there seems scarcely the necessity of demonstration, appearing, as they did to him, as simple problems of cause and effect, while to others they are only unsubstantiated dogmas. The want of the power of close analysis of his sensations and the sentiment thence arising, is painfully felt where he attributes certain conditions of feeling peculiar to himself, or at least not universal, to all justly feeling men, leaving the inference that all who feel not these, do not feel justly. Thus, when he says—"For as it is necessary to the existence of an idea of Beauty, that the sensual pleasure, which may be its basis, should be accompanied, first with joy, then with love of the object, then with the perception of kindness in a superior Intelligence, finally, with thankfulness and veneration towards that Intelligence itself; and, as no idea can be at all considered an idea of Beauty, until it be made up of these emotions, any more than we can be said to

have an idea of a letter of which we perceive the perfume and the fair writing, without understanding the contents of it or intent of it; and as these emotions are in no way resultant from, nor obtainable by, any operation of the intellect, it is evident that the sensation of Beauty is not sensual on the one hand, nor is it intellectual on the other; but is dependent on a pure, right, and open state of the heart, both for its truth and for its intensity, inasmuch that even the right after action of the intellect upon facts of Beauty so apprehended, is dependent on the acuteness of the heart feeling about them." Now, it is most likely that Ruskin, with his peculiar temperament, might find his sensations of Beauty to follow the order which he has assigned, as far as he expresses it in the above sentence, but another will receive genuine sensations of Beauty in which this order is not at all perceptible, and to this one Ruskin's position is entirely dogmatic. We know very well that first comes the impression on the sense (which, perhaps, he means by the term "sensual pleasure," but which is not properly so, since the pleasure received from it depends on a subsequent emotion; sensual pleasure strictly being only that in which the delight is received *in the action of the sense*, without any sequence of spiritual emotion, while in sensations of Beauty, pleasure depends entirely on the acceptance, *by the mental processes*, of the impression made on the sense;) and after this, the joy, as Ruskin has it; but it seems to us that this joy is the emotion of love itself, and not something separate preceding it, but simply and purely the delight the mind takes in the awakening of Love; and the after feelings—the "perception of kindness" in, and "thankfulness and veneration" towards, a supreme Intelligence—we should be inclined to ignore altogether, as *necessary* constituents of an idea of Beauty, since we must first have the idea of Beauty, which we receive intuitively, before we can proceed from Beauty to its Author; which we do by reflection and the awakening of successive emotions. Beauty brought all these emotions to Ruskin, we doubt not; but it was fully and completely Beauty, and accepted with delight as such, even before he reached the "perception of kind-

ness," or before any rational estimate of a superior Intelligence could have been deduced thence.

It is necessary, therefore, in order to draw the clear confirmation of our views from Ruskin's theory, to divest Beauty of those influences which are its results, and to reject those unnecessary divisions which he makes in it. Of the former are those feelings above alluded to, the *rational* recognitions of Deity as the source of Beauty. We claim that the pleasure we receive from impressions of the beautiful is due to its force as an expression of Him, but accepted as we accept sunlight and rejoice in it, or receive warmth gratefully, *probably* because it gives us new sensations of spiritual vitality; *but not at all because*, by any *ideas* of cause and effect, we deduce Deity from Beauty. The conclusion drawn in the passage quoted, "that the sensation of Beauty is dependent on a pure, right, and open state of the heart," is just; but for reasons which which we shall show by and by, and not for those there given. The unnecessary division (which we must protest against) of Beauty into two classes, is contained in the following enunciation of his theory:—"By the term Beauty, then, properly are signified two things. First, that external quality of bodies already so often spoken of, and which, whether it occur in a stone, flower, beast, or in man, is absolutely identical, *which, as I have already asserted, may be shown to be in some sort typical of the Divine attributes, and which, therefore, I shall, for distinction's sake, call typical Beauty*; and secondarily, the appearance of felicitous fulfilment of function in living things, more especially of the joyful and right exertion of perfect life in man. And this kind of Beauty, I shall call *vital Beauty*." The passage we have put in *italics* contains that which we regard as the peculiarly valuable portion of Ruskin's theory—a truth, in consideration of the expression of which, being, as it is, the result of a high and glorious flight of pure intuition, much dogmatism and insufficiently-grounded speculation might be pardoned. It contains (if we may judge) the first correct indication of the final cause of Beauty which we have found among the theorists, declaring that the quality which we term Beauty is the expression in matter,

of the nature or attributes of God, the form in which, as we have before expressed it, He manifests himself in his works; and as Ruskin says, in another place, "a certain seal, or impress of divine work and character, upon whatever God has wrought in all the world." This, then, is the full and clear statement of the production of the phenomena, Beauty;—that the all-inhabiting Divine Spirit, in its perpetual creation, so moulds the dead matter in which it works, that all created things take form from its form, and thus become types of the great final Cause, and visible expressions of the nature of God, with the same absoluteness that the clay, under the hand of the sculptor, takes the form which belongs to the idea which animated the hand. It does not matter by what influences or elements, in immediate operation, these creations take their proper shapes; within every measurable agent is a subtler agent, and within every law lies a controlling law, until we reach the Divine Soul, from which all things borrow their forms, their actions, and their vitality. But there are qualities of form which do not belong to the beautiful, but which are, nevertheless, equally divine in their origin: from which it is evident that it is not enough that form should express Divine attribute to be beautiful, but that certain particular attributes alone can give cause to it. Design in Nature proclaims a Creator; but design is not beautiful. In this respect Ruskin has stopped short of the full solution; he has traced Beauty to God, but there stayed his inquiry; whether from reverence or indifference to further development of his theory, it matters not, except that in the setting apart what he terms vital Beauty, we are persuaded that this leads to error, for in so far as it is Beauty, we hope to be able to show, as we feel to be the case, that its origin is identical with what he terms typical Beauty; and that it only differs therefrom in being mingled with other delight-giving elements, such as the perception of design, order, and freedom of the individual creature, all of which give healthily constituted minds pleasure, though they are not qualities of Beauty. In his further discussion of this subject, he unfolds his meaning, as follows:—"For it is matter of easy demonstration that, setting the characters of typical Beauty aside, the pleasure afforded by every organic form is in proportion to its appearance of healthy vital energy; as in a rose-bush, setting aside all the considerations of graduated flushing of color and fair folding of line, which it shares with the cloud or the snow-crested, we find in and through all this certain signs, pleasant and acceptable

as signs of life and enjoyment in the particular individual plant itself. Every leaf and stalk is seen to have a function, to be constantly exercising that function, and, as it seems, solely for the good and enjoyment of the plant." It seems a little strange that Ruskin should have thus reverted at once to the hypothesis which he had overthrown in his examination of the associative theory of Beauty (Modern Painters, vol. ii. c. xii.), for his refutation of that theory would apply equally to his own theory of vital Beauty. In fact it appears as if he had grouped all the organic sources of delight into one thing, which he terms vital Beauty, for want of a term, when really the idea of Function is the predominant element in it, between which and the sensation of Beauty, even when mingled in one impression, it is absolutely necessary to distinguish. That this is really what he means, is further evident by subsequent passages:—"Now, I wish particularly to impress upon the reader, that all these sensations of Beauty in the plant arise from our unselfish sympathy with its happiness;" the fallacy of which declaration ought to be evident without much study, because if it could be true, either it is also true that Beauty is a matter of thought (because to sympathize with the condition of anything, a certain amount of absolute knowledge of its nature and needs and a succession of perceptions is necessary), and of partial recognition of cause and effect, in which case our former conclusions with respect to it are erroneous, since thus it would not be received as a sensation, nor be intuitive in its character; or otherwise he means an entirely different quality from Beauty which he also calls Beauty—a simple misapplication of terms. A little later he says again, "The bending trunk, waving to and fro in the wind above the waterfall is beautiful, because it is happy;" an expression which throws the whole subject into confusion again, because if his former ideas were correct and our theory is tenable, a thing is beautiful independently of any after considerations, Beauty being a quality absolute and eternal.

It is clear from what is shown above, that Ruskin himself was in some way confused in this matter, and that, in his study of the lower orders of creation, he has noted the simple expression of Function—not of use performed for us, but the just and ready performance of the functions necessary to the object's own existence, and applied to it the word Beauty, clearly a misapplication of the term, because it cannot signify two essentially different things, which Function and Beauty are. If a new word was needed, let him make

it, but not confuse thought by misplacing one already defined by his own admission. If this were all of his theory of "vital Beauty," we should dismiss it with no further remark; but in his application of it to man, he enters on grounds of much greater importance, and the examination of which is necessary to the clearing of his theory from the confusion he has left it in. The chapter on "Vital Beauty in Man,"* is full of grave and pertinent suggestions on the subject of our investigation, to some of which we shall endeavor to pay the attention they deserve.

"Having thus passed gradually through all the orders and fields of creation, and traversed that goodly line of God's happy creatures who 'leap not but express a feast where all the guests sit close and nothing wants,'" without finding any deficiency which human invention might supply, nor any harm which human interference might mend, we come at last to set ourselves face to face with ourselves, expecting that in creatures made after the image of God we are to find comeliness and completion more exquisite than in the fowls of the air and things that pass through the paths of the sea.

But behold now a sudden change from all former experience. No longer among the individuals of the race is there equality or likeness, a distributed fairness and fixed type in each, but evil diversity, and terrible stamp of various degradation; features seamed with sickness, dimmed by sensuality, convulsed by passion, pinched by poverty, shadowed by sorrow, branded by remorse. * * * * * Well for us only, if, after beholding this our natural face in a glass, we desire not straightway to forget what manner of man we be.

"Herein there is at last something, and too much for that short-stopping intelligence and dull perception of ours to accomplish, whether in earnest fact or in the seeking for the outward image of beauty; to undo the devil's work, to restore to the body the grace and power which inherited disease has destroyed, to return to the spirit the purity and to the intellect the grasp they had in Paradise. Now, first of all, this work, be it observed, is in no respect a work of imagination. Wrecked we are and nearly to pieces; but that little good by which we are to redeem ourselves is to be got out of the old wreck, beaten about and full of sand though it be; and not out of that desert island of pride, on which devils split first, and we after

* We would request the reader to study this whole chapter (the fourteenth of the second volume), as we can only extract passages; when to be perfectly clear we ought, perhaps, to give the whole.

them;* and so the only restoration of the body that we can reach is not to be coined out of our fancies, but to be collected out of such uninjured and bright vestiges of the old seal, as we can find and set together, and so the ideal of the features, as the good and perfect soul is seen in them, is not to be reached by imagination, but by the seeing and reaching forth of the better part of the soul to that of which it must first know the sweetness and goodness in itself, before it can much desire, or rightly find, the signs of it in others.

"Now, of the ordinary process by which the realization of ideal bodily form is reached, there is explanation enough in all treatises on art, and it is so far well comprehended, that I need not stay long to consider it. So far as the sight and knowledge of the human form, of the purest race, exercised from infancy constantly, * * could render the mutual intelligence of what is right in human form so acute as to be able to abstract and combine from the best examples so produced, that which was most perfect in each; so far the Greek conceived and attained the ideal of bodily form: and on the Greek modes of attaining it as well as on what he produced as a perfect example of it, chiefly dwell those writers whose opinions on this subject I have collected; wholly losing sight of what seems to me the most important branch of the inquiry, namely, the influence for good or evil, of the mind upon the bodily shape, the wreck of the mind itself, and the modes by which we may conceive its restoration.

* * * * *

"Hence, therefore, in the indications of the countenance, they are only the hard out lines and rigid settings and wasted hollows that speak of past effort and painfulness of mental application, which are inconsistent with expression of moral feeling for all these are of infelicitous augury, but not the full and serene development of habitual command in the look and solemn thought in the brow, only these in their union with the signs of emotion become softened and gradually confounded with a

* It is really unfortunate that Ruskin could not have refrained from mingling with his studies of a thing so purely religious as Beauty, and yet demanding such philosophic abstraction, his merely theological dogmas, in respect to which so many of the earnest and thoughtful must differ with him, thus impairing materially his own usefulness in one direction without accomplishing anything in the other, and so his indiscreet advocacy of what he considered a vital truth, has fallen with injury on the truth he really labored for—as it was said of old—For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me; and this needlessly, for there is nothing of Theology which must be considered with Beauty.

serenity and authority of nobler origin. *But of the sweetness which that higher serenity (of happiness) and the dignity which that higher authority (of Divine law and not human reason), can and must stamp on the features,* it would be futile to speak here at length, for I suppose that both are acknowledged on all hands, and there is not any beauty but theirs to which men pay long obedience: at all events, if not by sympathy discovered, it is not in words explicable with what divine lines and lights the exercise of godliness and charity will mould and gild the hardest and coldest countenance, neither to what darkness their departure will consign the loveliest. *For there is not any virtue, the exercise of which, even momentarily, will not impress a new fairness upon the features,* neither on them only, but on the whole body, both the intelligence and the moral faculties have operation, for even all the movements and gestures, however slight, are different in their modes according to the mind that governs them, and on the gentleness and decision of just feeling there follows a grace of action, and through this a grace of form, which by no discipline may be taught or attained."

The passages which we have italicised, we would have especially studied. There is this thing confirmed in our theory, that Beauty is the expression of Goodness, and Ruskin, in this division of it into Vital and Typical, has indicated a final and practical analysis of the whole subject, though we are fully persuaded that the distinction which he makes is only one of the manner of expression, not of the quality expressed. His "vital beauty" may be considered as divided into promise of function and expression of individual moral beauty. Thus, in the lower orders of creation where moral attribute cannot be ascribed, it is simply "the appearance of felicitous fulfilment of function in living things," but in man, where there is a moral "function" to be expressed, there enters the element of Beauty, which is, by Ruskin's analysis, "the sweetness which that higher serenity (of happiness) can and must stamp on the features," the expression in "the ideal of the features" "of the good and perfect soul." If, therefore, we eliminate from the consideration all perception of physical function, the reasons for which exclusion we have shown before, human beauty, according to this theory, remains as the result of certain spiritual qualities acting upon the matter of which the body is composed, and thereby changing the actual form of it so that it becomes capable of demonstration, as a really existing condition of matter resulting from the action of spirit; and the

spiritual attributes to which this action belongs are indicated in the passage:—"by the seeing and reaching forth of the better part of the soul to that of which it must first know the sweetness and goodness in itself, &c." Thus far the "Modern Painters" confirms our theory unmistakably—there remains only to identify the vital beauty of man, thus defined, with the typical beauty as he finds it rendered in the universal form, and without regard to any expression of moral qualities in the object. To connect the beauty of a flower, and the expression of a beautiful eye, so that they should seem to be effects of the same cause, is a wide stretch of causation, but it must be remembered that the quality which we term Beauty gives us the satisfaction peculiar to it, not merely because it is such or such a form; but because the intuition seizes, in that form, a type or absolute expression of a certain quality in the regarding of which the soul finds a delight. Thus in the lines of a beautiful mouth, we find a suggestion of goodness of character, and the joy which follows the perception of the beauty is attributable to an innate satisfaction in that goodness; and the beauty in this form is as much typical as that which Ruskin distinguishes as such; and the only difference which we can admit between the beauty of "the good and perfect soul," shining out by the features, and that which dwells "in all God's works, is that we refer the former at once to its spiritual cause, and recognize it as having its origin in goodness; while we receive the other by an incomprehensible sympathy, not understanding the connection between it and the divine goodness. The one is the result of the action of the spirit of man upon his material organization, the body he inhabits, and the other the result of the controlling influence of the Divine spirit upon the matter in which it moves, and of which it is the life and the soul. This is, it seems to us, the inevitable conclusion of the analysis of Ruskin's theory of Beauty, in which he erroneously premised the perception of function as an enter.

In the practical application of the theory we advocate, we shall have more to say of this admirable essay, but for the present need examine it no further. In the philosophy of Swedenborg, who carried intuition to the fullness of science, we have found a more explicit confirmation of our views; but which, unsupported by reasoning as it is in this case, must pass for what it will be taken at, by those who receive or reject his system. "Because all beauty is from good which is in innocence; essential good when it flows in from the internal

man into the external; constitutes what is beautiful, and hence is all human beautiful-ness." (*Arcana Coelestia*, 3080.) "Hence it is, that the angels of heaven are of ineffable beauty, being, as it were, loves and charities in form." (*A. C.*, 4986.) And here we shall leave the philosophers, and return to the further elaboration of the idea on which we have based our notions.

SOME REMARKS

UPON THE

LIFE OF E. R. HAYDON,

Historical Painter.

By Frederick G. Stephens.

SECOND ARTICLE—(Continued).

At the end of 1811, "Macbeth" was finished, offered to Sir G. Beaumont for £500, and declined by him, with this proposal—that Haydon should accept as a consideration for his trouble in commencing the picture £100, or a new commission of a smaller size, the price to be settled by arbitration; a sufficiently absurd proposition, and a dreadful disappointment to Haydon. He was six hundred guineas in debt, incurred by the events of life and the expenses of his picture. Thus, after three years' hard work on the picture, it was thrown on his hands. "I had no money." This is the time he chooses for an attack on the Royal Academy, which seems to have been unprovoked by anything since the ill-treatment of Dentatus, three years before: a time sufficient, we should have thought, to have allowed even that disappointment to become mitigated; he might have waited to see whether that body was not willing to atone for their alleged injustice; but no consideration withheld him. Let the reader consider this position. Penniless, six hundred guineas in debt, a competitor for a prize in an institution where the academicians could not but have great influence; and with an unsold picture on his hand—this period he chooses to assail a powerful body in his own profession, whom he could not expect to convert, as they had made their own position by the very practices he sets about to denounce; they were mostly too old to learn that they had been in error all their lives, certainly would not be taught by his manner of proceeding. He says, and wisely, "To expose the ignorance of a powerful nation (thus offending the patrons); and to attack the academy (thus insuring an alliance of the academicians with the patrons), would have been at any time the worst and most impolitic thing on earth. Had I been quiet, my picture would have been sold, the prize of three hundred guineas would have been won, and in a short time I might have recovered the shock his (Sir G. Beaumont's) caprice had inflicted."

He dragged Wilkie into this matter, to his great and reasonable annoyance, and raised such a storm about his own ears, as for his whole life after was not allayed; he asserts this (we cannot say with justice) to have affected his prospects and success for forty years; in fact, he was fairly in opposition. He had, indeed, materially hindered himself from doing the very

good which lay at his heart; for with power in his own hands, which success would have brought him, and to obtain which he need not have compromised his honor, he could have wrought out his own purpose with much greater means than he ever possessed.

"Thus, then, for the rest of my anxious life my destiny was altered. I had brought forty men, with all their high connexions, on my back at twenty-six years, and there was nothing left but 'victory or Westminster Abbey.' I made up my mind for this comfort, and ordered a larger canvas for another work."

His wrath against the "forty men, and all their high connexions," appears to have blinded him a little; perhaps the attitudinizing vanity of the men, made him represent the matter to himself in this way; but we are bound to remark that the academicians themselves do not seem to have been seriously alarmed, or even very indignant; at least they were not implacable; for we find Haydon, in a few years after, making overtures of peace in a diplomatic series of visits to individual members; and also, when it suited him to contribute to the annual exhibitions, his pictures were well hung.

The picture for which he ordered the larger canvas, just mentioned, was the "Judgment of Solomon," 14 feet 10 inches, by 10 feet 16 inches, which appears to be the finest of all his work; possessing real qualities of color which are entirely absent from the others: it is curious to observe throughout the autobiography that he speaks little of the delightful mystery of color; in truth, he had small notion of it, horrid greens and brick reds pervading by far too much the majority of his works: no doubt this fault was materially against their success; for their want of popularity it is quite sufficient to account. We do not mean that sort of popularity which led people to come and stare at his pictures, impressed with the grandeur of their designs and the masterly, sweeping swagger of their execution, but rather that want of attractiveness which checked people from buying them. His idea of the colors of flesh, the key and master note of all the rest, was to judge from the present state of the pictures, anything but what "Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on."

"My canvas came home for 'Solomon,' of a grand size. God in Heaven grant me strength of body and vigor of mind to crown it with excellence. Amen—on my knees." These volumes are thickly interspersed with such energetic prayers for his own success, and always concluded with the word "Amen." Searched, in the evening, Kings II. for hints of architecture, my hand is more certain than it was, from the schooling it had had in wading through the drudgery of 'Macbeth' and 'Dentatus.' Let not this diminish, but increase, my exertions. Let them, O God, end only with my existence."

Some of these prayers storm Heaven with importunity for his own benefit and progress: there is often a wild, hard, kind of eloquence about them which is striking. Take a specimen—

"O, God Almighty, who so mercifully assisted me during my last picture; who enabled me to combat and conquer so many difficulties; and gave me strength of mind

superior to all, desert me not now, O Lord, desert me not now, O Lord, thy mercy is infinite; to thee will I again cry. Assist me, O God! my difficulties are again accumulating, and will yet accumulate; grant me strength of mind and of body to meet, again to conquer them. Soften the hearts of those at whose mercy I am: let them not harass me; let them not interrupt me. Grant that I may be able to proceed unchecked by sickness with my present great picture, and conclude it as it ought to be concluded. Let not the progress of this picture be disgraced by the vices which disgraced the last. Let me be pure, holy, and virtuous; industrious, indefatigable, and firm * * * O God, in pecuniary emergencies thou hast never deserted me, still in such moments stretch forth thy protecting hand. Amen. Amen." Then follows a prayer for his father and sister, after which:—"O God, let me not die in debt. Grant that I may have the power to pay all with honor, before thou callest me hence. Grant this for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

Following this, comes—"Artists, who take up this art as an amusement or a trade, will laugh heartily at these effusions of trust in God, and this fear of being unworthy; but I took up the art by His inspiration * * * when sinking, he has cheered me; when afflicted, he has elevated me with triumph; when insolent he has corrected me. He has always whispered to me that I should carry the great point; to carry which he caused me to quit my home and family."

It seems that he had need now of pecuniary assistance, and received it from the Hunts, "always generous;" at this time he complains of being entirely deserted by people of fashion; however, he worked on with the usual spasmodic energy; until in the middle of the year, the directors of the British Institution decided respecting the premiums they had offered, for the principal of which Haydon was, as we have said, a competitor. This decision, for judgment it could not be called, is, we think and hope, without parallel in the history of art. It appears there was exhibited, *privately*, a poor picture, by an artist named Richter, of Christ healing the Blind; this was not in the competition at all, but it so struck the fancy of the directors, that they resolved to withdraw the premium of three hundred guineas, for which Haydon submitted his "Macbeth," and also the ordinary prize of two hundred guineas, which appears to have been annual; putting them together, they purchased for five hundred guineas Richter's picture; voted one hundred guineas to the "bad picture of a poor painter," and offered Haydon thirty guineas, [1] that he might not be the loser by the cost of his frame, which he says cost sixty.

This was really the most extraordinary of "decisions" which perhaps was ever made: let the reader consider that the artist competing had painted on the faith of a prize, which the directors not only did not award, but they actually purchased a work which was not submitted to them. Poor Haydon, again defeated, "tore up their note in disgust. I really was for a few minutes staggered, but soon recovered my wonted spirit."

Here was bitterness of disappointment. Poor Haydon! And this was not the less